

BOOK REVIEWS

THE WESTERN JOURNAL OF MEDICINE does not review all books sent to it by the publishers. A list of new books received is carried in the Advertising Section.

LEGAL ASPECTS OF MEDICAL PRACTICE—Second Edition— Bernard Knight, MD(Wales), MRC Path, DMJ of Gray's Inn, Barrister-at-Law, Reader in Forensic Pathology, Welsh National School of Medicine, University of Wales, Cardiff; Honorary Consultant Pathologist, South Glamorgan Area Health Authority. Longman, Inc., Churchill Livingstone - Medical Division, 19 West 44th St., New York City (10036), 1976. 254 pages, \$14.50 (Softbound).

Devoted primarily to forensic pathology (that is, medical matters relating to criminal law), this handbook places considerable emphasis upon forms, procedure and statutory law. Unfortunately, the legal discussion is based wholly on the law of the British Isles, and could seriously mislead American readers.

Information presented on various medicolegal topics—such as abortion, the battered child, alcoholism, poisoning, injury and death due to physical agents, asphyxia and sexual offences—is a concise review of relevant medical aspects for the reader. However, this book is brief and provides little depth in the subject matter. As there are several more complete forensic pathology books by American authors available, *Legal Aspects of Medical Practice* would be a poor choice for American readers.

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ACUPUNCTURE THERAPY—Current Chinese Practice—Second Edition— Leong T. Tan, MD, practicing urologist, San Francisco; Margaret Y.-C. Tan, MS, Acupuncturist, Acupuncture Research Clinic, University of California, San Francisco; and Ilza Velth, PhD, DMedSc, Professor and Vice Chairman, Department of the History of Health Sciences, University of California, San Francisco. Temple University Press, Philadelphia (19122), 1976. 259 pages, \$17.50.

The interest in acupuncture in western countries, especially the United States, has been reflected by the large number of publications, both those written in English and English translations of Chinese texts. Many of these publications are not suited for medical readers because they are merely an explanation of traditional Chinese philosophy and religion and give the history of development of acupuncture and other Chinese remedies. Others are written for lay audiences or explain acupuncture in such simplified terms that they have no practical application.

Much has changed since the first edition of this text was published in 1973. The initial enthusiasm by acupuncture advocates that acupuncture is a panacea for all ills has been tempered. At the same time resistance among medical practitioners to the incorporation of acupuncture into the therapeutic armamentarium has also decreased. In the preface of the second edition the authors state "Aspirin is not a cure-all! Nor is acupuncture! Any different approach is misguided, possibly even of questionable ethics." This certainly reflects current medical thinking on the subject.

The major portion of the book is devoted to the technical aspects of acupuncture therapy. Detailed descriptions of acupuncture needles and techniques of needle insertions are extremely valuable. Although these techniques are fairly straightforward, several methods which enable an acupuncturist to carry out his therapy with a minimal amount of patient discomfort are explained.

The method used to locate acupuncture points is concise, informative and easily understood. These explanations are accompanied by detailed drawings which enable the reader to easily follow the text. Because of the attention to detail in the written text and diagrams, even the relatively uninitiated are able to locate many acupuncture points without much difficulty and for this reason this text is one of the most useful of the currently available books on the subject.

Several new chapters have been added to the present edition and several original chapters have been rewritten. Information about the legal status of acupuncture, new and expanded information on acupuncture anesthesia, a section on lesser used acupuncture points and expansion of the chapter on auricular therapy are valuable additions. A short chapter on diseases and symptoms amenable to acupuncture therapy describes the general principles involved in the choice of points both in the local area as well as at distant sites. Despite the fact that this section was incomplete in the original book, it has not been updated in the current edition. The selection of acupuncture points for the treatment of specific symptoms is extremely brief and the interested reader would do well to refer to other available English texts.

A major shortcoming of the original work was that the authors chose not to follow the western practice of labeling each point by its meridian name and sequential number. This deficit is somewhat corrected by the inclusion of tables indexing all points on each meridian by meridian name and number. However, in the rest of the text these numbers are not used and extensive cross-checking is necessary in order to fully understand acupuncture point location, therapeutic indications for their use, and the like. Even considering the weak points, the second edition of *Acupuncture Therapy* is an extremely useful one for physicians and other medical practitioners who wish to become more familiar with this technique and perhaps incorporate it into their practice.

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THE HEREDITY FACTOR—Genes, Chromosomes, and You— William L. Nyhan, MD, PhD, with Edward Edelson. Grossett & Dunlap, Inc., Publishers, 51 Madison Ave., New York, NY (10010), 1976. 320 pages, \$12.95.

This book is intended for lay persons; most specifically for the patients or parents of patients with genetic diseases. To write such a text, summarizing the modern science of human clinical genetics, is a formidable task which the author undertakes with cheerful optimism. Chapters on the classical history of genetics, Mendelian inheritance, chromosomes and chromosomal diseases, disorders of sex chromosomes, amniocentesis, prenatal diagnosis, population genetics, multifactorial inheritance, treatment, eugenics, ethics and genetic counseling suggest the breadth of content. The book attempts to sweep the reader along, as geneticists have been swept along within the last two decades, from Mendel's pea plants to prenatal diagnosis of Tay-Sachs disease. The detective-story